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ABSTRACT

Writing a document that is clear and easy to understand is difficult. This resource book is a guide to making written material easier to read, understand, and use. The guide is targeted at those who write work-place documents--industry or TAFE (Technical and Further Education) trainers, managers, supervisors, union representatives or writers of training manuals--but would also be useful for any person who wants his/her writing to be clear. The first section, Before You Begin, discusses what you need to think about before you start to write. Section 2, Organizing Your Document, looks at how to structure a document. Section 3, Using Language, discusses how language can make documents easier to understand. Section 4, Presentation: Layout and Design, looks at how to produce documents that look better and are easier to read. Section 5, Does It Work? Check With Your Readers, talks about the importance of trying out a document before using it. The guide uses sample documents to show what to do and what not to do, and checklists help writers see quickly that they are on the right track. (NKA)

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Working Words

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A User's Guide to Written Communication at Work

CS 511 622

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Working Words:
A User's Guide to Written Communication at Work

Jan Hagston (Kindler)
for
Western Metropolitan College of TAFE,
Victoria

Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Victoria
1994. Updated 2001.

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- Jeanette Dalton, English in the Workplace Program, Adult Migrant Education Services
- Daryl Evans, Department of Adult Basic Education, Western Metropolitan College of TAFE
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- Max Radcliffe, Associate Director, Western Metropolitan College of TAFE
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- Simon Wallace, Australian Textile, Footwear and Clothing Industry Training Board
- Fiona Worthy, Department of Language Studies, Western Metropolitan College of TAFE.

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Contents

Acknowledgements		iii
Introduction		vii
1.	**Before you begin**	1
	Checklist	7
2.	**Organising your document**	9
	Checklist	17
	Some examples	19
3.	**Using language**	29
	Checklist	35
	Some examples	37
4.	**Presentation: Layout and design**	47
	Checklist	55
	Some examples	57
5.	**Does it work? Check with your readers**	67
	Checklist	71
6.	**References**	73

Introduction

Most of us would agree that many aspects of work have changed. These changes are due to a number of factors.

- Workplaces are being restructured and work processes reorganised. Many workers now work in teams. These teams need to decide their own work schedule and check their own quality.
- Technology is constantly changing and training is necessary to develop new skills to use the new technology.
- Supervisors now need to help workers to plan and organise themselves. Frequently they are also required to train other workers.
- Managers and workers need to work together and to communicate with each other. Workers cannot make team decisions without a certain amount of information.
- Award restructuring has also changed work. Workers can train to increase their skills and thus become classified at a higher level in the award.

These changes have led to the increased use of written communication in the workplace. Workers must be able to read and write, understand spoken language, participate in discussions, use problem solving techniques and undertake training. Many also need to calculate quite difficult maths problems and read and understand graphs. A growing number also need to be computer literate.

Other factors have further increased the use of written communications in the workplace. For example, the Occupational Health and Safety Act has given greater need for well written documents (signs, procedures, safety booklets) about workplace health and safety.

Purpose of this book

This book is a resource for people who write workplace documents. They may be industry or TAFE trainers, managers, supervisors, union representatives, or writers of training materials. They may write a range of materials - memos, notices, training materials or procedure manuals.

Writing a document is not always easy; writing a document that is clear and easy to understand is often difficult. **This book is a guide to making written material easier to write, understand and use.**

Structure of the book

This book is divided into six sections.

The **first section, Before you begin**, discusses what you need to think about before you start to write.

Section 2, Organising your document, looks at how to structure a document.

Section 3, Using language, discusses how language can make documents easier to understand.

Section 4, Presentation: Layout and design, looks at how to produce documents that look better and are easier to read.

Section 5, Does it work? Check with your readers, talks about the importance of trying out a document before using it.

In the **last section, Section 6**, references are given for those interested in finding out more about writing clearly.

In **Sections 2, 3** and **4** the reader is given practical guidelines to use when writing a text. These guidelines are illustrated by the use of four different types of workplace documents - a memo; a notice; a section of an operating procedures manual; and a section of a training manual.

A range of different documents are used in workplaces. Not all are used in this book. The shaded boxes in the table below indicate the type of workplace documents that are used in this book.

Types of written documents in the workplace

Workplace context	Written documents
Communication between management and employees re organisational matters	Notices, memos, policy documents, forms, reports
Communication in meetings	Agendas, minutes
Information on technical procedures	Instructions, standard operating procedures, technical reports
Training	Manuals, notices, tests
Communication with clients, customers	Letters, advice notices, forms

Taken from Communication in the Workplace: Plain English in the Workplace, Brown and Solomon, presentation at a workshop conducted for AMES Victoria, September 1993.

Both *good* and *bad* examples of documents are included in these sections to show what to do and what not to do.

✔ in the top right hand corner of the sample documents, indicates a well set out and well written document.

✘ shows that the document needs to be reorganised, rewritten or set out differently.

The sample documents, used to illustrate how to write clear workplace documents, are about training in occupational health and safety. However, the guidelines and ideas apply to all workplace documents. Occupational health and safety was chosen as the content of documents because it is a subject relevant to all workplaces.

Sections 1 to **5** also contain **checklists** of the most important points in each section. The checklists can be used by writers as a quick guide to check they are on the right track.

In the margins you will notice icons showing some of the documents. These have been included to help you find examples of the information being discussed

1. Before you begin

1. Before you begin

Why you are writing (purpose), what you are writing about (topic), and who you are writing for (audience) affect how a document will look and sound. You need to think about these things before you begin to write.

Purpose - why am I writing this?

A memo from the General Manager, a notice about a training course and a training manual may all be about the importance of safety in the workplace, but the information, tone of what's written, and the language used will be very different in each. This is because the purpose of each document is different.

The purpose of a document affects:

- the information you will include
- the tone of what you write
- the language you will use
- the amount of space you will give to different bits of information
- the order in which the information will be presented.

Topic - what am I trying to say?

You need to be clear about the topic you are writing about and how much you want to say about it.

The following questions will help you focus on what you are writing.

❒ What information needs to be included so the purpose is clear?

Jot down all the points that are relevant to the topic. It is very easy to include extra details or other information but these can confuse the reader and put them off.

❒ Are there any points that are more important than others?

Usually one or two points are more important than others. You need to be clear about these so you can make them stand out in some way.

❒ How much information does the reader need?

Too much information can confuse the reader and make it difficult to find the main points.

More space should be given to important points. If you give equal space to minor points the reader may have trouble identifying the important points.

❒ Is there anything that is difficult to explain?

Technical terms and new ideas and information need to be introduced slowly and explained thoroughly.

Often the most difficult points to explain are the ones the writer has the most difficulty understanding. If you have difficulty explaining some points ask someone for 'technical' assistance.

Diagrams and examples may help to illustrate and explain a difficult point.

If you are describing something completely new, start with general information then deal with the specifics.

Audience - who am I writing for?

You also need to be clear who you are writing the document for. This is just as important as being clear about why you are writing.

This means that if you want your readers to understand what you have written you must write in a way they will understand.

❒ How well do they read English?

Limited reading ability is not uncommon. A survey conducted in 1996 found that 19% of the adult population in Australia had difficulty with very basic reading. This may be due to English not being their first language, but is also due to factors such as disrupted schooling, having had no chance to attend English classes, or simply being out of practice.

❒ Are the readers familiar with the type of document?

It is much easier to understand written documents if you are familiar with the type of document. People who have never picked up a training or procedure manual will not know what to expect. If you give them a way of finding their way around the document, and easily identifying the main sections or pieces of information, they will be able to use it and understand it more quickly.

Workers who left school early, or were at school a long time ago may have less experience of different types of texts. For example, they may not be used to reading technical material or reports.

❒ What do they already know about the topic?

If the reader knows a lot about the topic you will be able to use technical terms and jargon with little explanation and introduce new ideas and information quickly. But, if the reader is not an expert you need to explain and introduce new terms and ideas. You should avoid using jargon with readers who are unfamiliar with the topic.

❒ What sort of words does the reader use to talk about the topic?

Readers find it easier to understand a topic if they are familiar with the language used.

It is usually better to start with the words and terms the reader uses and introduce new or technical terms later.

How should I present the information?

Before you start writing, think about which format would best help you achieve the purpose of the document, explain the topic and be easily accessible to the reader.

Most people write and then think about how to present (or lay out) what they have written. They may then find that the best way of presenting the information requires them to rewrite large parts of the document.

The best documents are the ones where the writer has thought about how the document will look before starting to write.

How you expect a document will look, affects what you write and how you organise material in the document.

For example, if you use shaded boxes to give the meanings of technical terms, you will not need to include these definitions in the text. If you don't make this decision until after you have finished writing you may need to rewrite some parts. The more you think about what the document will look like when you have finished, the less you will have to rewrite.

A good presentation can also help to capture the reader's interest. A reader who is interested in the topic is more likely to try to understand the written material than one who isn't. If you can make your writing interesting and make it look interesting more people are going to try to understand it. You can find out more about presenting a document in Section 4, **Presentation: layout and design**

The writer has a responsibility to the reader to make the written document as easy to understand as possible. Readers can only use documents well if the writer is conscious of the reader and writes appropriately.

Before you begin
Checklist

- ❒ Am I clear about why I am writing?
- ❒ Am I clear about who I am writing for?
- ❒ Have I included only relevant information?
- ❒ Have I decided how to explain difficult ideas?
- ❒ Are the readers likely to be familiar with the type of document I am writing?
- ❒ Are the readers familiar with the topic?
- ❒ Do I know what sort of words the readers use to talk about the topic?
- ❒ Have I got a clear idea what the document will look like when I've finished?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you know you are on the right track.

2. Organising your document

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2. Organising your document

Documents need to be organised so they are clear and easy to read.

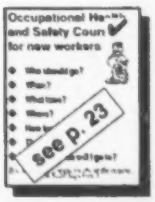
Whatever size the document you are writing, you need to think about the organisation of the whole document and of the seperate parts. You also need to show the reader how the document is organised.

Organise the whole of the document first

❒ **List the essential points you need to get across.**

❒ **Organise your list into a logical order.**

Doing this should ensure that the points and sections are linked. This makes understanding easier. Readers find it easier to read sentences or instructions if the actions or events are presented in chronological order.



❒ **Give the document a title.**

A title lets readers know what the document is about.

❒ **Mark the most important points.**

These points need more thought and probably more space.

❒ **Mark any points that may be difficult to explain.**

Diagrams and examples help to explain a difficult point. It is also easier for the reader if you start with information they already know and understand and use that to introduce new or difficult ideas.

Organise separate parts of the document

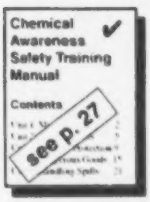
❒ Group the points that go together.

In short documents these will become your paragraphs. In longer documents they will become separate parts, chapters or sections.

❒ Make headings and sub-headings for each group of points.

Use headings that give the reader an idea of what the information that follows is about.

Help the readers to find important information



❒ Introduce the material.

This tells your readers what to expect, what the document is about and how it is organised.

❒ Show how you have organised the document.

This can be done by using a table of contents, paragraphs, headings, numbered sections and bullets.

❒ Use headings.

Headings:

- help the reader find information quickly and easily
- break up the information into manageable bits
- make the document look less intimidating
- tell the reader where they can take a *breather*
- make it easier for the reader to remember the content
- signal a change in the content.

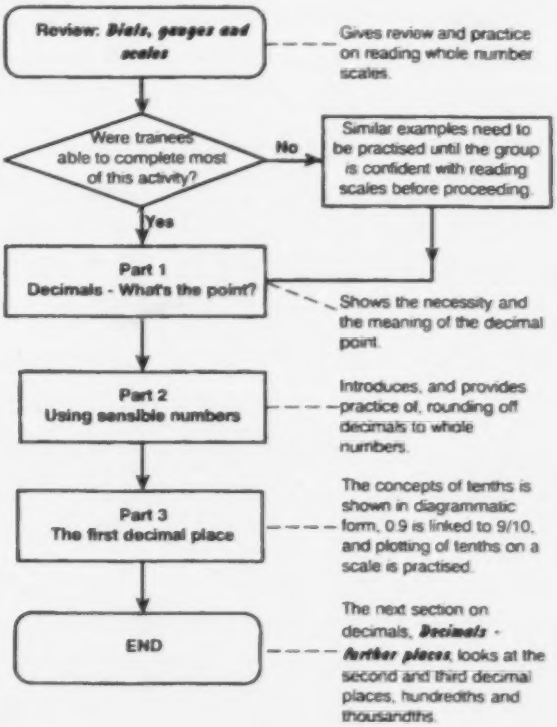
Headings should:

- always be meaningful and related to the topic
- stand out
- be consistent. The size of print used for the headings of sections should always be the same
- indicate the importance of the information. Smaller print should be used for sub-headings.

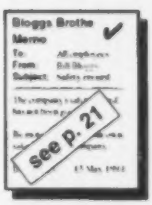
❒ In longer documents make a table of contents.

A **table of contents** tells readers about the organization of the document and makes it easier to find information. Although this is useful to all readers, it is especially important for people with low reading skills, who cannot skim through documents quickly and easily.

A flow chart, like the one below, is another way of telling readers what is in a document and how it is organised.


Review: Dials, gauges and scales
Gives review and practice on reading whole number scales.
Were trainees able to complete most of this activity?
No
Similar examples need to be practised until the group is confident with reading scales before proceeding.
Yes
Part 1
Decimals - What's the point?
Shows the necessity and the meaning of the decimal point.
Part 2
Using sensible numbers
Introduces, and provides practice of, rounding off decimals to whole numbers.
Part 3
The first decimal place
The concepts of tenths is shown in diagrammatic form, 0.9 is linked to 9/10, and plotting of tenths on a scale is practised.
END
The next section on decimals, Decimals - further places, looks at the second and third decimal places, hundredths and thousandths.

❒ Divide your document into paragraphs.



Each paragraph should be about one main idea.

- The first sentence in a paragraph should contain the main idea. This gives the reader a clear idea of what the rest of the paragraph is about.
- The other sentences in the paragraph should be about the one main idea. They may explain it, give examples of it, or more detail about it.
- Complicated information, or a discussion of several different ideas, needs to be broken up into separate paragraphs.

❒ Don't cram too much information into the one sentence.

Sentences should only be about one thing. If you want to include a similar point or give details, start another sentence.

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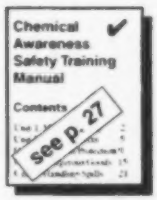
❒ Number sections of longer documents.

Often in books like Training Manuals and Operating Procedures sections will be numbered. Even in this book each section is numbered.

Numbering sections can help the reader find information quickly, especially when one section refers the reader to another part of the book. But if the numbering system becomes too complicated it may hinder rather than help the reader.

❒ Use dot points for emphasis.

Dot points (which are sometimes called bullets) help to emphasize important points of a sentence or paragraph. They also help break up information and show organisation.

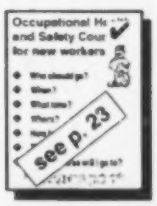


- Use **bullets (➢, ♦, ●, ❑)** to highlight the points.
- When you have a lot of information on one topic, make a list of the important points.
- Keep the lists short.
- Group similar points together.

❒ At the end of a section, summarise the main points.

This leaves the reader with a clear idea of the most important point.

Graphic information



Graphic information refers to photos, illustrations, cartoons, diagrams, flow charts, graphs and charts.

Graphic information can:
- help to explain a point
- highlight a point
- give the readers a clue about the content before starting to read
- add interest to a document.

❒ Link the graphic information to the text.

Graphic information should be placed on the page next to, or close, to the writing about it.

❒ Take into account the maths skills of your readers.

If you use graphs and tables you need to take into account the maths skills of your readers. People with poor maths skills can find graphs and tables hard to understand.

❒ Choose graphics appropriate to the content and purpose of the document.

❒ Make sure the meaning of the graphic is clear.

You may also need to give an explanation or to title the graphic.

Icons are often used in Training Manuals. If you use icons you should always explain what they are used for.

Organising information logically, linking it together and indicating which information is important, makes it easier for the reader to understand the document.

Organising a document
Checklist

- ❒ Have I included all the important points?
- ❒ Are the points organised into a logical order?
- ❒ Does the document have a title?
- ❒ Does each section have a heading?
- ❒ Have I introduced the material?
- ❒ Is there only one main idea in each paragraph?
- ❒ Is there a summary at the end of each section or at the end of the document?
- ❒ Is the graphic information linked to the written text?
- ❒ Am I sure the readers will be able to understand the graphic information I have used?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you are well on your way to writing a well organised document.

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Organising a document
Some examples

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Organising a Memo - what not to do

BLOGGS BROS. P/L
123 White Crescent, BAYSWATER VIC 3153
Ph 03 567 8899 Fax 03 567 8898
NAL MEMORANDUM
All employees
From: Bill Bloggs, General Manager
Subject: Safety procedures Date: 13/5/01
Most staff will be aware of the accident that occurred last week in the factory involving a company employee.
While the company has a safety policy, this incident highlights the importance of full compliance with the policy and the necessity of eeting safety targets.
Bloggs Bros. success in Australia, and growing success overseas, is due to the quality of our products, employees willingness to 'pull together', and the present economic conditions which have contributed to the favourable price of raw materials. Employee growth in the last six months may have contributed not only to the accident which occurred last week but the recent spate of minor accidents.
The safety performance in the company of late has been far from atisfactory. Bloggs Bros. wishes to avoid any more serious accidents nd reduce minor accidents. All staff are asked to ensure a turn around n safety attitudes.
Appropriate action will be taken to improve safety procedures.
The main idea of the memo is not immediately clear.
The paragraphs do not follow in a logical order.
This paragraph includes points not relevant to the topic.
There is more than one main idea in the paragraph.
The ideas in the paragraphs are not linked.

Organising a Memo - what to do

Bloggs Brothers

Memo

To: All employees

From: Bill Bloggs, General Manager

Subject: **Safety record**

The company's safety record has not been good lately.

I am particularly concerned about the accident that occurred here last week. I am also concerned about the number of minor accidents that have occurred lately.

Good safety record
The company has always had a good safety record. We believe safety in the workplace is extremely important and we had been working well towards our safety targets for this year.

Safety procedures important
It is important that everyone understands and follows safety procedures.

New workers
New workers may be less familiar with the safety procedures. The Training Manager will contact new workers to organise training in safety procedures.

Be more careful for your own sake and for the company's.

Bill Bloggs 13 May 2001

The main purpose of the memo is stated in the first sentence.

Sub-headings emphasize important points.

The ideas in all the paragraphs are linked and follow in a logical order.

Shows the end of the document.

The last paragraph summarises the main point of the memo.

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Organising a Notice - what not to do

The heading doesn't tell the reader what the notice is about.

Bloggs Bros P/L

NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES WHO COMMENCED WORK AT BLOGGS BROS IN 1994

It would be better to present the information as a list of points.

There is too much information in one paragraph.

OH&S courses will be held in the Training Room on Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am. The first course begins on Tuesday 24th May and will be held over 5 weeks. Another course will start in the following week.

All employees who commenced work at Bloggs Bros this year are required to attend. You will receive notification of which course to attend. Those unable to attend one course due to conflicting work responsibilities should give their names and availability for the alternative course to the supervisor.

There are too many different ideas in the one paragraph.

SAM SMITH
Training Manager

Organising a Notice - what to do

The heading clearly tells the reader what the document is about.

The graphic illustration gives the reader a clue to the topic of the notice and catches the reader's attention.

Bloggs Brothers

Occupational Health and Safety Courses for new workers

All the points in the notice are about the main heading.

- **Who should go?**
  Workers who began work at Bloggs Bros this year.
- **When?**
  Course 1 - Tuesday 24th May
  Course 2 - Tuesday 28th June
- **What time?**
  Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am
- **Where?**
  The Training Room
- **How long?**
  5 weeks
- **The trainer?**
  Alexandria Dumas, the new Training Officer
- **Which course will you go to?**
  A list will be put on the Notice Board the week before the first course starts.

The information is presented in separate points so the reader can quickly find the information.

The information is presented in a logical order.

If you have any questions about the course, ask your Supervisor.

Organising Operating Procedures - what not to do

The main heading and sub-headings look the same. This makes it hard for the reader to find information quickly.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine, which is a hazardous process. In the above process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen etc) and these present their own particular hazards. Hazards caused by equipment such as overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.3.

There is too much information in the one paragraph.

2.2 MANDATORY GENERAL SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.2.1. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL PERSONS ENTERING THE CELL ROOM

Because the headings don't stand out it is harder for the reader to remember the content.

Approved apparel must be worn. Safety apparel consists of safety glasses, gloves, hats and a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape

roved eye and face protection must be carried and worn in ated plant areas and when undertaking certain jobs. This will vide eye protection against corrosive and/or hot liquids.

3. The supervisor or control room operator must be advised of worker's location and job.

4. As a precaution against hydrogen explosion, smoking in the cell room is prohibited.

5. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with and have a thorough understanding of the Factory Emergency Procedures.

6. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with the location of safety showers and eyewash bottles.

7. All liquors on the plant must be treated as for caustic soda.

8. The magnetic field in the cell room may damage the mechanism of analogue watches and as such it is preferable to refrain from wearing them.

5

The numbering system in these Operating Procedures is complex and can become confusing to the reader.

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Organising Operating Procedures - what to do

Operating Procedures

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine. This is a hazardous process.

In the process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen). These chemicals have their own hazards.

Hazards caused by equipment such as the overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.2, **Specific Hazards and Precautions**.

Headings are clear and stand out. This makes it easier for the reader to find and remember information.

Each paragraph is about a separate idea.

The numbering system used in these Operating Procedures is simple and makes it easier to find information.

Operating Procedures

2.2 Compulsory Safety Instructions

Safety Instructions - cell room

All people going into the cell room must:

- **wear approved safety boots, glasses, gloves, hats and carry a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape mask**
- **carry goggles or a face shield.** You should wear them in designated plant areas and when carrying out certain jobs. Goggles and face shields protect your eyes from corrosive and hot liquids
- **tell the supervisor or control room operator where they will be working and what job they will be doing**
- **not smoke** in the cell room. This is a precaution against a hydrogen explosion
- **understand the Factory Emergency Procedures.** You can get a copy of the Factory Emergency Procedures from the Safety Officer
- **know where all the safety showers and eyewash bottles are**
- **treat all liquids on the plant as if they are caustic soda**
- **not wear a conventional type of watch** in the cell room. The magnetic field in the cell room can damage your watch.

When you have a lot of information on one topic make a list of points so the information stands out clearly.

Bullets show that the points are about the same, or a similar, topic.

6

25

Organising a Training Manual - what not to do

There is nothing to show the reader how the document is organised or what else is covered in it.

SECTION 1. CHEMICAL AWARENESS SAFETY TRAINI

UNIT 1. MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Refer to Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Operating Procedures Manual.

Objectives: By the end of this unit you will know about the chemicals that you will be handling in the mercury cell area, the type and location of safety equipment used in the Mercury Cell Plant and the appropriate time to use it, and also about mercury hygiene.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) provide information about the chemical name and symbols, storage, handling, physical properties, health considerations, TLV, personal protection recommendations, first aid, fire/explosion hazards, spills, disposal and toxicity of chemicals. Employers have a legal obligation to provide such information about chemicals used and held at a site.

It would have been better to list the information as dot points.

Activity 1 - Chemicals in the plant

Use Section 2.4 to fill in the table below. List the chemicals (chemical symbols and common name) that you will handle in this area and alongside each one indicate the hazard (including reactivity with other chemicals) and the safety equipment that is correct and necessary when handling that particular chemical.

It's not clear how this activity is linked to the unit's objective.

Chemical	Hazard	Protective Equipment

There is nothing to leave the reader with a clear understanding of the main points of the unit.

Too much information is crammed onto one page.

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Organising a Training Manual - what to do

Section 1.
Chemical Awareness Safety Training

A table of contents shows what is covered in a document and where to find it.

Contents

Unit 1.	Material Safety Data Sheets	2
Unit 2.	Health Effects of Chemicals Stored on Site	5
Unit 3.	Personal Protection and Engineering Controls	9
Unit 4.	Dangerous Goods Labelling	15
Unit 5.	Handling Spills	21
Unit 6		

Unit 1. Material Safety Data Sheets

Introducing the material tells the reader what the document, or this part of it, is about.

What is this unit about?

In this section you will become familiar with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and the type of information found on the Sheets.

What will I learn in this unit?

In this unit you will learn:

- what Material Safety Data Sheets are
- the purpose of Material Safety Data Sheets
- the type of information found on the Material Safety Data Sheets.

What section of the Operating Procedures ... relevant to this unit?

Dot points are a good way of grouping similar points together.

...aterial Safety Data Sheets?

Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about chemicals and how they should be stored and handled. Material Safety Data Sheets are often called MSDSs or MSD Sheets.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act says that MSDS must be kept for each chemical held a the site.

Safe handling information	
Storage and transport	
fire or explosion hazards	
spills	
disposal	

A summary at the end emphasises the main points of the section and leaves the reader with a clear idea of what the section is about.

Summary

Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about the chemicals used on site. The Sheets contain information about handling chemicals, their effects on health and first aid.

3. Using language

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3. Using language

In this section we look at the language of a document, how to use language to create the right tone for the audience and how to achieve the purpose and get across the information required.

Using technical language

Technical terms are useful because:

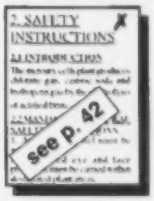
- they give a lot of information quickly. It usually takes a lot more words to say the same thing if you don't use technical terms
- a non-technical equivalent may not exist and a description or explanation has to be used instead of the term
- in training manuals the terms are often part of what the reader must learn.

However, using technical terms can make it difficult for readers who are unfamiliar with the content and the terms.

❒ Use of technical terms will depend on what your readers know.

Readers who are familiar with the content will be able to handle more technical terms than those who are new to the topic.

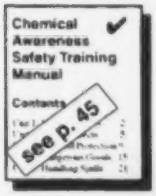
Many workers will have heard the technical terms, but may not have seen them written, and may have trouble reading them at first.



❒ Don't use too many technical terms.

This can make it hard for even a knowledgeable and good reader to understand the document.

❒ Give the reader some help in understanding technical terms.



You can do this by:

- explaining the terms in the text
  For example - *You should never use the vernacular (jargon),*

or

- putting the definition in a box on the same page

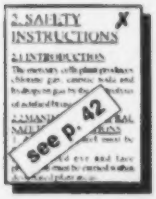
or

- putting the definition in a footnote.

Glossaries (lists and explanations of terms) can also be used. These are usually placed at the end or start of a document. But, because the technical term in the text and the definitions are not together, they are usually more difficult for the reader to use.

Making it clear

❒ Choose words carefully.

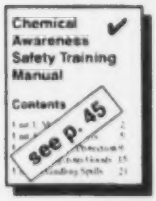


- Use a well known word instead of an unfamiliar one.
- Use several familiar words instead of one unusual word.
- Never use a foreign word when an English word will do.
- Never use jargon or the latest expressions in documents that have to last a long time, e.g. Training Manuals and Operating Procedures. Jargon and expressions can go out of fashion and may be misunderstood by people from a non-English speaking background.

❒ Cut out unnecessary words.

Unnecessary words can make it all seem harder than it really is.

❒ If you use acronyms tell your reader what they mean.



Acronyms are formed from the first letter of words which they represent.

Give the full name the first time and the acronym. For example, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) or Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Sometimes acronyms are so well known you don't need to give the full name e.g.. GMH, ABC, BHP.

❒ Avoid using negatives.

It is better to say what to do than what not to do.
For example, instead of:
If you do not attend the course, you will not be able to operate the crane
use:
You must attend the course if you wish to use the crane.

Sometimes using a negative is effective and can be used to emphasize danger or warnings.
For example: DON'T SMOKE.

❒ Don't use double negatives.

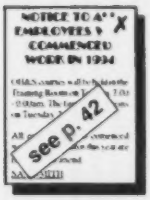
Double negatives are difficult to understand and can be ambiguous.

For example, *"I didn't say that it can't be done"* may mean it can be done or that it can only be done under some circumstances or that it can be done technically but there is not time to do it .

❒ Don't use too many chains of nouns.

Chains of nouns are strings of two or more nouns used to name one thing. For example, *adult worker attendance.* They contain a lot of information but are often difficult to understand and are sometimes ambiguous.

❒ Avoid turning verbs into nouns.



Nominalisation is the term used for turning verbs into nouns. In documents which are 'heavy' and sound 'academic' the verbs have often been turned into nouns.
For example, instead of:
The ***requirement*** *of the employer . . . .*
use:
The employer ***requires*** *. . . .*

❒ Try not to have long sentences.

Long sentences are harder to understand and usually contain more than one idea. Remember sentences should contain only one idea. This was discussed in Section 2, **Organising your document**.

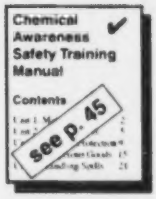
If the sentence is too long, break it up. But don't go overboard as too many short sentences can be difficult to read.

Using personal language

Documents that are hard to read are often written in impersonal language. Others that are written in personal language can sometimes seem patronising. You need to consider the type of document you are writing and who you are writing it for before you decide if you are going to use personal language.

It's usually better to write letters and memos using personal language while operating procedures do not need to be personal. Training manuals and training materials can use a combination.

❒ You can make a document more personal by addressing the reader directly.



Using words like *you*, *we*, and *I* makes the document more personal.

For example:
personal language: *I am particularly concerned about . . . .*
and
impersonal language: *There is particular concern with . . . .*

❒ Making your writing active rather than passive also makes a document more personal.

Active writing also makes it quite clear who should do what.

For example:
passive: *If a fire is started, help should be summoned immediately and a supervisor or manager called.*
active: *If a fire starts, get help and call a supervisor or manager straight away.*

Explaining complex ideas

❒ Use practical descriptions and examples to explain the theory.

The examples and descriptions should be straight forward and should illustrate one idea only. Diagrams can also be used to explain complex ideas or information.

Keep your audience in mind when you write.

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Using language
Checklist

- ❒ Have I used technical language suitable for the readers?
- ❒ Have I given the readers some help to understand the technical terms?
- ❒ Are the words used suitable for the readers?
- ❒ Have all the unnecessary words been cut?
- ❒ Is the language used in the document clear?
- ❒ Is the *tone* right for the audience and the topic - not too personal or impersonal?
- ❒ Are the difficult ideas explained clearly?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, it is likely you will have written a clear and easy to read document.

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Using language
Some examples

Writing a Memo - what not to do

BLOGGS BROS. P/L
123 White Crescent, Bayswater Vic 3153
Ph 03 567 8899 Fax 03 567 8898

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: All employees
From: Bill Bloggs, General Manager
Subject: Safety procedures Date: 13/5/94

Most staff will be aware of the accident that occurred last week in the factory involving a company employee.

While the company has a safety policy, this incident highlights the importance of full compliance with the policy and the necessity of meeting safety targets.

Bloggs Bros. success in Australia, and growing success overseas, is due to the quality of our products, employees willingness to 'pull together', and the present economic conditions which have contributed to the favourable price of raw materials. Employee growth in the last six months may have contributed not only to the accident which occurred last week but the recent spate of minor accidents.

The safety performance in the company of late has been far from satisfactory. Bloggs Bros. wishes to avoid any more serious accidents and reduce minor accidents. All staff are asked to ensure a turn around in safety attitudes.

Appropriate action will be taken to improve safety procedures.

The verb 'comply' has been changed into a noun. This makes the document seem 'heavy'.

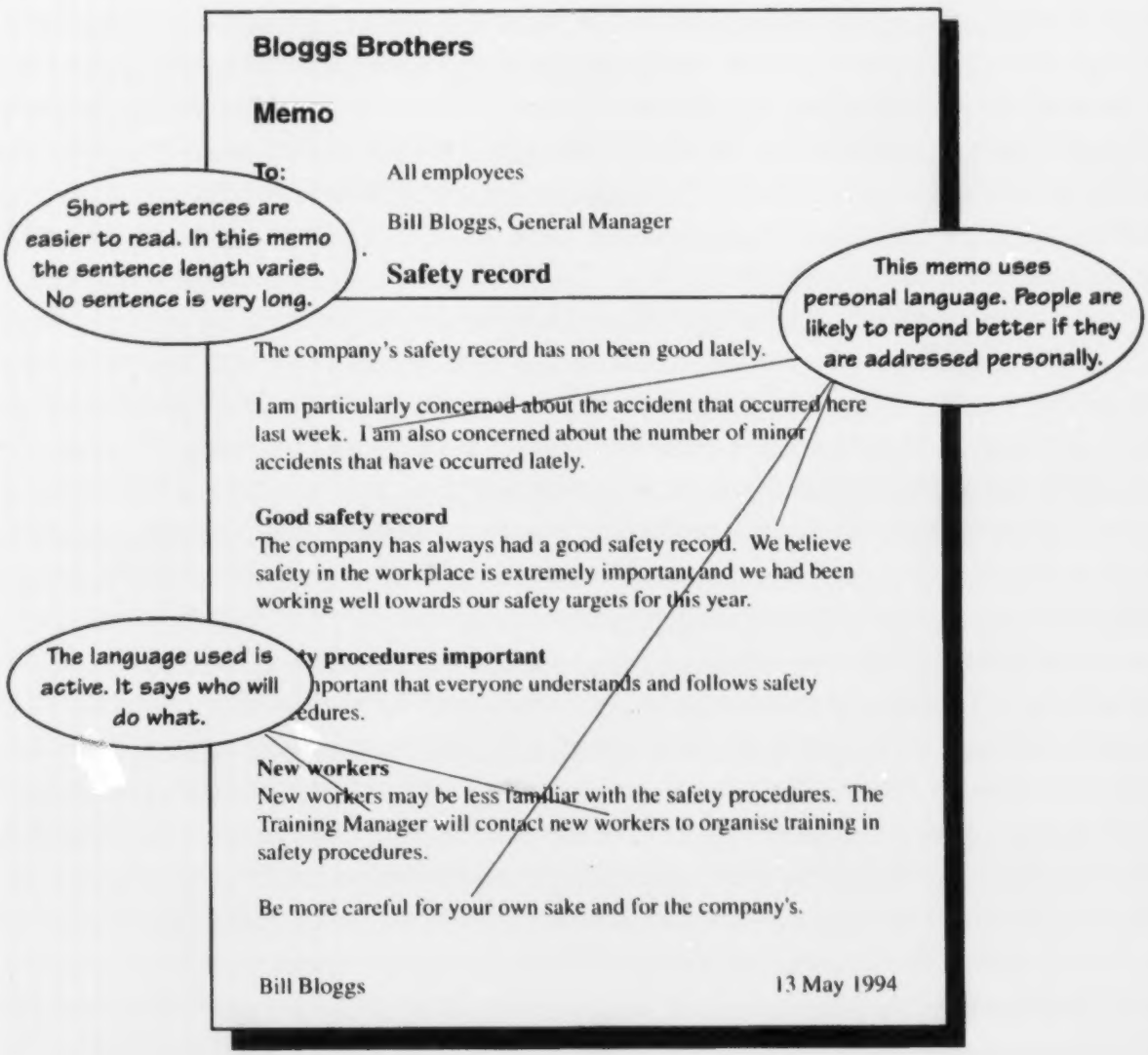
The sentence is too long and has too many different points in it.

Unnecessary words and phrases make it harder to understand the meaning.

The language in the memo is impersonal. Impersonal language emphasises the power of the writer over the reader.

Passive language, like that used in this memo, is boring and hard to read.

Writing a Memo - what to do


Bloggs Brothers
Memo
To: All employees
Bill Bloggs, General Manager
Safety record
The company's safety record has not been good lately.
I am particularly concerned about the accident that occurred here last week. I am also concerned about the number of minor accidents that have occurred lately.
Good safety record
The company has always had a good safety record. We believe safety in the workplace is extremely important and we had been working well towards our safety targets for this year.
ty procedures important
portant that everyone understands and follows safety
edures.
New workers
New workers may be less familiar with the safety procedures. The Training Manager will contact new workers to organise training in safety procedures.
Be more careful for your own sake and for the company's.
Bill Bloggs
13 May 1994
Short sentences are easier to read. In this memo the sentence length varies. No sentence is very long.
This memo uses personal language. People are likely to repond better if they are addressed personally.
The language used is active. It says who will do what.

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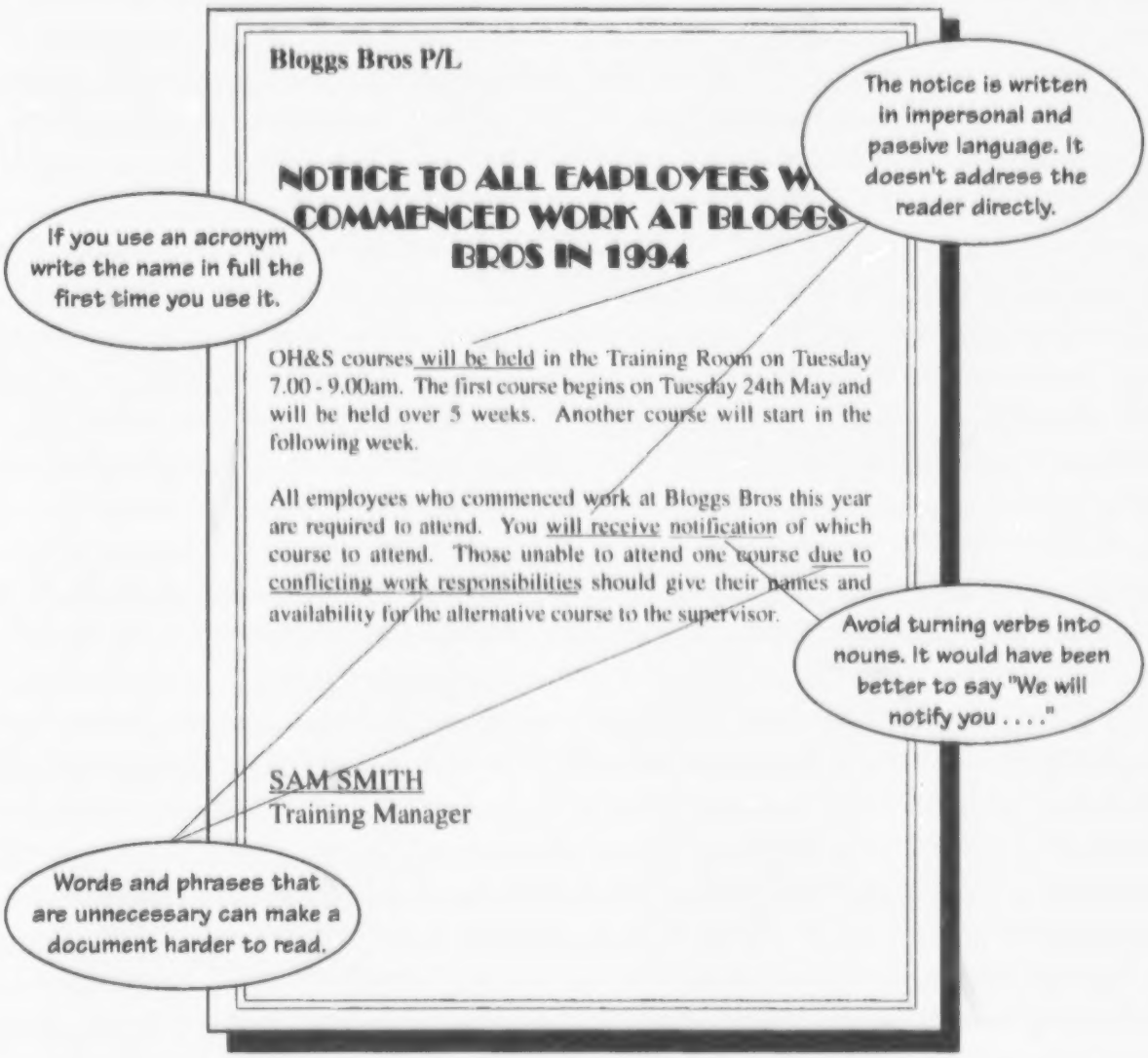
Writing a Notice - what not to do



Bloggs Bros P/L

NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES W
COMMENCED WORK AT BLOGGS
BROS IN 1994

OH&S courses will be held in the Training Room on Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am. The first course begins on Tuesday 24th May and will be held over 5 weeks. Another course will start in the following week.

All employees who commenced work at Bloggs Bros this year are required to attend. You will receive notification of which course to attend. Those unable to attend one course due to conflicting work responsibilities should give their names and availability for the alternative course to the supervisor.

SAM SMITH
Training Manager

The notice is written in impersonal and passive language. It doesn't address the reader directly.
If you use an acronym write the name in full the first time you use it.
Avoid turning verbs into nouns. It would have been better to say "We will notify you . . . ."
Words and phrases that are unnecessary can make a document harder to read.

Writing a Notice - what to do

Occupational Health and Safety is written in full. The acronym is not given because the name is not used again in the document.

Bloggs Brothers

Occupational Health and Safety Courses for new workers

- **Who should go?**
  Workers who began work at Bloggs Bros this year.
- **When?**
  Course 1 - Tuesday 24th May
  Course 2 - Tuesday 28th June
- **What time?**
  Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am
- **Where?**
  The Training Room
- **How long?**
  5 weeks
- **The trainer?**
  Alexandria Dumas, the new Training Officer
- **Which course will you go to?**
  A list will be put on the Notice Board the week before the first course starts.

If you have any questions about the course, ask your Supervisor.

The language used is clear and simple and addresses the reader by using a question and answer format.

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Writing Operating Procedures
- what not to do

Too many technical terms makes this hard to read.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine, which is a hazardous process. In the above process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen etc) and these present their own particular hazards. Hazards caused by equipment such as overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.3.

2.2 MANDATORY GENERAL SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.2.1. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL PERSONS ENTERING THE CELL ROOM

1. Approved apparel must be worn. Safety apparel consists of safety boots, glasses, gloves, hats and a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape mask.

2. Approved eye and face protection must be carried and w designated plant areas and when undertaking certain jobs. Th provide eye protection against corrosive and/or hot liquids.

3. The supervisor or control room operator must be advised of worker's location and job.

4. As a precaution against hydrogen explosion, smoking in the cell room is prohibited.

5. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with and have a thorough understanding of the Factory Emergency Procedures.

6. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with the location of safety showers and eyewash bottles.

7. All liquors on the plant must be treated as for caustic soda.

8. The magnetic field in the cell room may damage the mechanism of analogue watches and as such it is preferable to refrain from wearing them.

5

Passive language is used which sometimes makes it unclear who should do what.

Use well known words, not unfamiliar ones. For example, it would be better to use liquids instead of liquors and clothes instead of apparel.

Writing Operating Procedures
- what to do

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine. This is a hazardous process.

In the process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen). These chemicals have their own hazards.

Hazards caused by equipment such as overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.2, **Specific Hazards and Precautions**.

Separating points into different paragraphs makes it easier for the reader to tackle difficult ideas.

2.2 Compulsory Safety Instructions

Safety Instructions - cell room

All people going into the cell room must:

- **wear approved safety boots, glasses, gloves, hats and carry a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape mask**.
- **carry goggles or a face shield.** You should wear them in designated plant areas and when carrying out certain jobs. Goggles and face shields protect your eyes from corrosive and hot liquids.
- **tell the supervisor or control room operator where they will be working and what job they will be doing**
- **not smoke** in the cell room. This is a precaution against a hydrogen explosion.
- **understand the Factory Emergency Procedures.** You can get a copy of the Factory Emergency Procedures from the Safety Officer.
- **know where all the safety showers and eyewash bottles are.**
- **treat all liquids on the plant as if they are caustic soda.**
- **not wear a conventional type of watch** in the cell room. The magnetic field in the cell room can damage your watch.

Operating Procedures usually use impersonal language. These Operating Procedures use some personal language. This attracts the reader's attention.

Sometimes using the negative can be effective.

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Writing a Training Manual
- what not to do

The sentences are long and contain a lot of different, but related information. It would be better to break up the information into separate sentences or use dot points, as in the example of the Training Manual on the opposite page.

So many technical terms are used that it is hard for even a knowledgeable reader to understand the text.

AL AWARENESS SAFETY T

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Refer to Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Operating Procedures

Objective: By the end of this unit you will know about the chemicals that you will be handling in the mercury cell area, the type and location of safety equipment used in the Mercury Cell Plant and the appropriate time to use it, and also about mercury hygiene.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) provide information about the chemical name and symbols, storage, handling, physical properties, health considerations, TLV, personal protection recommendations, first aid, fire/explosion hazards, spills, disposal and toxicity of chemicals. Employers have a legal obligation to provide such information about chemicals used and held at a site.

Activity 1 - Chemicals in the plant

Use Section 2.4 to fill in the table below. List the chem (chemical symbols and common name) that you will ha this area and alongside each one indicate the hazard (in reactivity with other chemicals) and the safety equipment th correct and necessary when handling that particular chemical.

An acronym is used but the name is not given in full. Readers may not know what it means.

Chemical	Hazard	Protective Equipment

Most of the language used is impersonal. Training Manuals play the role of a trainer and need to talk to the reader as well as providing information. Very little on this page of a Training Manual talks to the reader.

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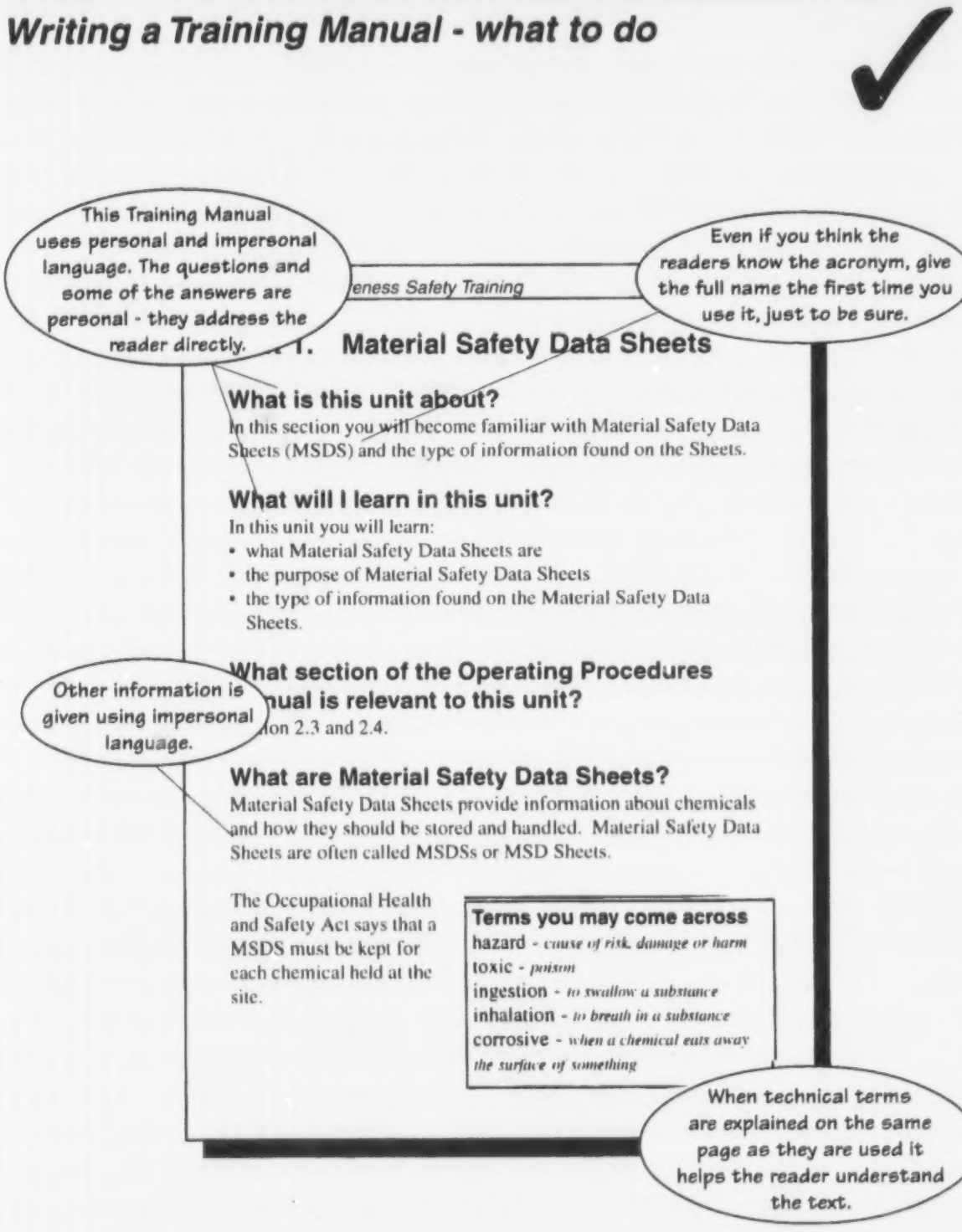
Writing a Training Manual - what to do



This Training Manual uses personal and impersonal language. The questions and some of the answers are personal - they address the reader directly.

Even if you think the readers know the acronym, give the full name the first time you use it, just to be sure.

eness Safety Training

1. Material Safety Data Sheets

What is this unit about?

In this section you will become familiar with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and the type of information found on the Sheets.

What will I learn in this unit?

In this unit you will learn:

- what Material Safety Data Sheets are
- the purpose of Material Safety Data Sheets
- the type of information found on the Material Safety Data Sheets.

Other information is given using impersonal language.

What section of the Operating Procedures nual is relevant to this unit?

ion 2.3 and 2.4.

What are Material Safety Data Sheets?

Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about chemicals and how they should be stored and handled. Material Safety Data Sheets are often called MSDSs or MSD Sheets.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act says that a MSDS must be kept for each chemical held at the site.

Terms you may come across

hazard - *cause of risk, damage or harm*
toxic - *poison*
ingestion - *to swallow a substance*
inhalation - *to breath in a substance*
corrosive - *when a chemical eats away the surface of something*

When technical terms are explained on the same page as they are used it helps the reader understand the text.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Presentation: Layout and design

4. Presentation: Layout and design

The way you present information on the page is just as important as the words and sentences you use. A well written document is easier to read if it is well laid-out.

In this section we consider how you can produce documents that look better and are easier to read and understand.

Typeface

Computers have given us many more options in setting out documents and, in particular, in the choice of typeface (or font) we can use.

Typeface refers to the style and appearance of print.

❒ Use a plain typeface for the body of the document.

Plain typefaces are easier to read. Some common ones are:

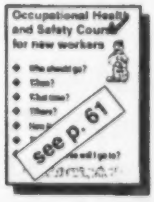
- times roman or times, which has been used for most of the text in this book
- helvetica
- geneva, which has been used in this book for headings
- arial.

Other typefaces can be more elaborate. For example:

- **Showtime**
- *Brush hand*
- Script

and there are many, many others.

The elaborate type faces may be useful for headings or to make writing stand out, like the balloons on the document pages, where a typeface called *QTTechtone* has been used. But these typefaces are often hard to read and should not be used for the main part of a document.



❒ Use a different typeface for headings.

This makes the headings stand out more.

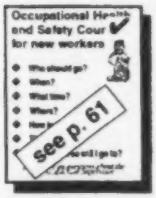
❒ Don't use too many different typefaces.

It gives a messy look. Usually you would only use two, or at the most three, different typefaces in a document.

Type size

The size of type is referred to as being the point size.

❒ **Make sure the size of the type is big enough for your readers.**



Most documents are in 12 point, like this is.

This paragraph is in 10 point type size. 10 point type size is usually the smallest size you should use. Small type makes a document look crammed and harder to read.

A bigger type size (for example, 14 point like this) can be used for headings.

Notices and posters may be in an even bigger type size, for example 30 point.

Upper and lower case

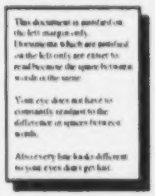
Text in upper case (CAPITALS) is harder to read than text in upper and lower case. If you use all capital letters, the word shapes are rectangular and are less familiar to the reader. But if you use upper and lower case every word has a different shape and is easier to recognise.

For example: CAPITALS capitals

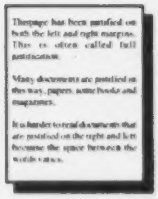
CAPITALS can be useful to draw attention to headings or a brief statement, such as:
WARNING or **DON'T SMOKE**

Justification

Justification is the term for the alignment of text on a margin. Documents can be:

- justified on the left margin only 

- justified on the right margin only

- justified on both the left and right margins (full justification) 

- centred.

❒ Text should be justified on the left margin only.

It is easier to read documents that are only justified on the left margin:

- every line is a different length and looks different. This means the reader's eyes are less likely to stray to another line by mistake
- the space between each word is the same. In documents which are fully justified the space between each word is different and your eyes have to adjust constantly to these changes.

❒ Centering can be used for headings.

This makes headings stand out.

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Length of line

❒ Don't make lines of text too long or too short.

Long lines of text are hard to read because the reader's eye can stray to another line by mistake. Very short lines can also be hard to read.

You should have at least 2 cm margins on each side of the page and at the top and bottom.

White space

❒ Don't print on every bit of the page.

It is very daunting to be confronted with pages and pages of print. White space can tell readers where to have a break and can draw attention to important information.

- Be generous with margin space.
- Leave space between paragraphs.
- Don't make your paragraphs too long.
- Don't cram text. There should be enough space between lines of writing so that it doesn't look cramped. Use 1 or 1.5 spacing. If lines are too close together they are hard to read. If they are too far apart they are also hard to read.

Headings and sub-headings

We discussed the use of headings in Section 2, **Organising your document**. Remember headings and sub-headings help readers find their way round a document and help them find specific information.

❒ Headings and sub-headings should be consistently of the same size and type.

Readers use the size and look of headings and sub-headings to identify the importance of the section or the point, so you need to use the same size and type of headings throughout your document.

For example, if the heading above: 'Headings and sub-headings' had appeared like this:

'headings and sub-headings'

you wouldn't have thought the information was as important as in the

previous sections. However, if the heading looked like this:

Headings and Sub-headings

you might have thought the information was more important

Highlight important information

❒ Use boxes to separate key information from the rest of your text.

Boxes can also be used to separate instructions and introduce new terms.

❒ Bold important words or phrases.

Heavy type is called **bold type**.

If only a few words or phrases are bolded, the reader will notice them even when just glancing at the page.

❒ Use italic print to emphasise a phrase or word.

Avoid overusing italic print as it can be difficult to read.

❒ Use bullets for point form lists and summaries.

See Section 2, **Organising your document** for more detail.

❒ Colour can be used to set text apart.

- Coloured or shaded areas can be used to summarise important points or to separate instructions.
- Dark colour print on light paper is easier to read. For example, black on white paper or navy blue on white or cream paper.

Graphic information

The use of graphic information was discussed in Section 2, **Organising your document**. Graphics can be used to highlight and explain information and to add interest to a text.

A good format helps to highlight important information, links related sections and separates others.

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Presentation: Layout and design *Checklist*

- ❒ Have I used a plain typeface?
- ❒ Do the headings stand out?
- ❒ Is the size of the type easy to read?
- ❒ Is the document justified on the left side only?
- ❒ Have I left enough space to make it look uncluttered?
- ❒ Have I been consistent with the size of headings and sub-headings?
- ❒ Have I highlighted important information?
- ❒ Have I used graphics to add interest and to help explain information?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, your document will probably look clear and easy to read.

Presentation:
Layout and design
Some examples

Presenting a Memo - what not to do

BLOGGS BROS. P/L
123 White Crescent, Bayswater Vic 311
Ph 03 567 8899 Fax 03 567 8898

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: All employees
From: Bill Bloggs, General Manager
Subject: Safety procedures Date: 13/5/94

Most staff will be aware of the accident that occurred last week in the factory involving a company employee.

While the company has a safety policy, this incident highlights the importance of full compliance with the policy and the necessity of meeting safety targets.

Bloggs Bros. success in Australia, and growing success overseas, is due to the quality of our products, employees willingness to 'pull together', and the present economic conditions which have contributed to the favourable price of raw materials. Employee growth in the last six months máy have contributed not only to the accident which occurred last week but the recent spate of minor accidents.

The safety performance in the company of late has been far from satisfactory. Bloggs Bros. wishes to avoid any more serious accidents and reduce minor accidents. All staff are asked to ensure a turn around in safety attitudes.

Appropriate action will be taken to improve sa

There is nothing to break up the text and make it look more interesting.

This memo is justified on the right and left margins.

The reader's eyes are likely to stray to the wrong line by mistake because every line is the same length and looks similar.

When you justify a document on the right and left margins, the size of the spaces between words changes. Your eyes have to adjust to these changes and this makes the document harder to read.

Presenting a Memo - what to do

Bloggs Brothers

Memo

To: All employees

From: Bill Bloggs, General Manager

Subject: **Safety record**

The company's safety record has not been good lately.

I am particularly concerned about the accident that occurred here last week. I am also concerned about the number of minor accidents that have occurred lately.

Good safety record
The company has always had a good safety record. We believe safety in the workplace is extremely important and we had been working well towards our safety targets for this year.

Safety procedures important
It is important that everyone understands and follows safety procedures.

New workers
New workers may be less familiar with the safety procedures. The Training Manager will contact new workers to organise tra
safety procedures.

Be more careful for your own sake and for the co

Bill Bloggs

Short paragraphs break up the text and make the document look more interesting.

The text is broken up with headings.

The memo is justified on the left hand margin only so each line is a different length and looks different. This makes it harder for the reader's eyes to stray to the wrong line.

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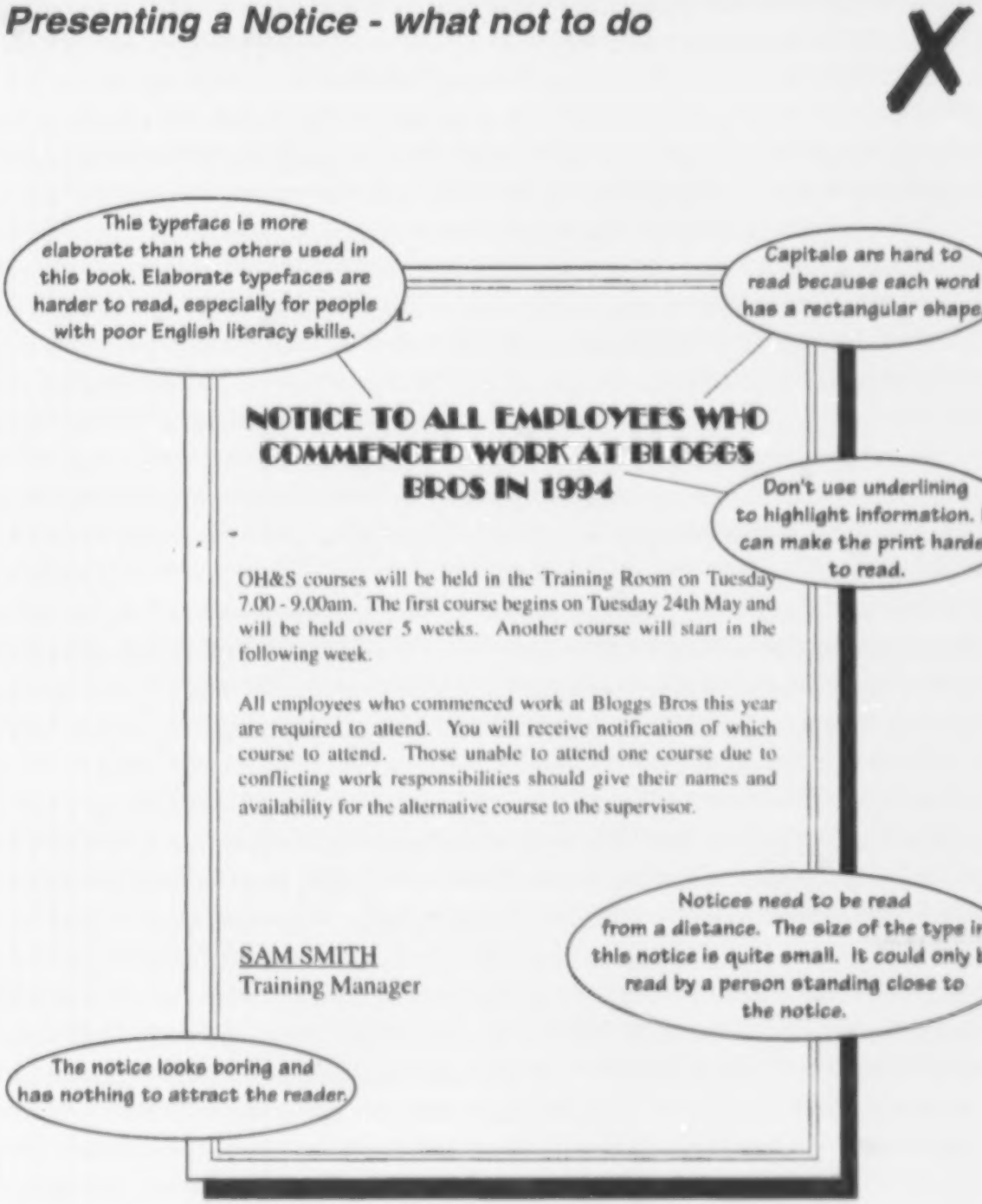
Presenting a Notice - what not to do


This typeface is more elaborate than the others used in this book. Elaborate typefaces are harder to read, especially for people with poor English literacy skills.
Capitals are hard to read because each word has a rectangular shape.
NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES WHO COMMENCED WORK AT BLOGGS BROS IN 1994
Don't use underlining to highlight information. It can make the print harder to read.
OH&S courses will be held in the Training Room on Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am. The first course begins on Tuesday 24th May and will be held over 5 weeks. Another course will start in the following week.
All employees who commenced work at Bloggs Bros this year are required to attend. You will receive notification of which course to attend. Those unable to attend one course due to conflicting work responsibilities should give their names and availability for the alternative course to the supervisor.
Notices need to be read from a distance. The size of the type in this notice is quite small. It could only be read by a person standing close to the notice.
SAM SMITH
Training Manager
The notice looks boring and has nothing to attract the reader.

Presenting a Notice - what to do

A different typeface or font is used for the headings. This makes the headings stand out.

Graphics add interest to a document and give the reader a clue about the content.

Occupational Health and Safety Courses for new workers

Brothers

- **Who should go?**
  Workers who began work at Bloggs Bros this year.
- **When?**
  Course 1 - Tuesday 24th May
  Course 2 - Tuesday 28th June
- **What time?**
  Tuesday 7.00 - 9.00am
- **Where?**
  The Training Room
- **How long?**
  5 weeks
- **The trainer?**
  Alexandria Dumas, the new Training Officer
- **Which course will you go to?**
  A list will be put on the Notice Board the week before the first course starts.

If you have any questions about the course, ask your Supervisor.

Bullets can be used to highlight points or sub-headings.

Documents that aren't completely filled with print are less intimidating and more likely to be read.

The print is large and clear and easy to read.

Italics can be used to highlight information.

Presenting Operating Procedures - what not to do

The headings don't stand out as they are in the same typeface as the body of the document.

Capitals can be useful to draw attention to headings. Too much text in capitals is hard to read as all words have the same rectangular shape.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine, which is a hazardous process. In the above process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen etc) and these present their own particular hazards. Hazards caused by equipment such as overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.3.

2.2 MANDATORY GENERAL SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.2.1. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL PERSONS ENTERING THE CELL ROOM

Underlining makes text harder to read.

1. Approved apparel must be worn. Safety apparel consists of safety boots, glasses, gloves, hats and a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape mask.

2. Approved eye and face protection must be carried and worn in designated plant areas and when undertaking certain jobs. This will provide eye protection against corrosive and/or hot liquids.

3. The supervisor or control room operator must be advised of worker's location and job.

4. As a precaution against hydrogen explosion, smoking in the cell room is prohibited.

5. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with and have a thorough understanding of the Factory Emergency Procedures.

6. Persons entering the cell room must be familiar with the location of safety showers and eyewash bottles.

7. All liquors on the plant must be treated as for caustic soda.

8. The magnetic field in the cell room may damage the mechanism of analogue watches and as such it is preferable to refrain from wearing them.

This example of Operating Procedures uses a plain type face which is easy to read but the printing on every bit of the page is daunting for readers.

Presenting Operating Procedures - what to do

Operating Procedures

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The mercury cells plant produces chlorine gas, caustic soda and hydrogen gas by the electrolysis of acidified brine. This is a hazardous process.

In the process other chemicals are used (eg mercury, hydrochloric acid, soda ash, sodium sulphide, hydrogen peroxide, nitrogen). These chemicals have their own hazards.

Hazards caused by equipment such as overhead crane, mercury trolley etc, are also outlined in Section 2.2, **Specific Hazards and Precautions**.

A different, but plain, typeface is used for the headings.

Operating Procedures

2.2 Compulsory Safety Instructions

Safety Instructions - cell room

All people going into the cell room must:

- **wear approved safety boots, glasses, gloves, hats and carry a chlorine gas mask or chlorine escape mask.**
- **carry goggles or a face shield.** You should wear them in designated plant areas and when carrying out certain jobs. Goggles and face shields protect your eyes from corrosive and hot liquids.
- **tell the supervisor or control room operator where they will be working and what job they will be doing**
- **not smoke** in the cell room. This is a precaution against a hydrogen explosion.
- **understand the Factory Emergency Procedures.** You can get a copy of the Factory Emergency Procedures from the Safety Officer.
- **know where all the safety showers and eyewash bottles are.**
- **treat all liquids on the plant as if they are caustic soda.**
- **not wear a conventional type of watch** in the cell room. The magnetic field in the cell room can damage your watch.

The white space lets the reader know this part of the unit has finished. The reader can take a break before going on to the next part.

Bold type is used to highlight important information.

Bullets help to highlight points.

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6

63

Presenting a Training Manual
- what not to do

This document is hard to read. It is justified on both the right and left margins, the headings do not stand out and there is no white space on the page.

SECTION 1. CHEMICAL AWARENESS SAFETY [illegible]

UNIT 1. MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Refer to Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Operating Procedures Manual.

Objective: By the end of this unit you will know about the chemicals that you will be handling in the mercury cell area, the type and location of safety equipment used in the Mercury Cell Plant and the appropriate time to use it, and also about mercury hygiene.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) provide information about the chemical name and symbols, storage, handling, physical properties, health considerations, TLV, personal protection [illegible]dations, first aid, fire/explosion hazards, spills, disposal [illegible]chemicals. Employers have a legal obligation to [illegible]mation about chemicals used and held at a site.

Long lines of text also make this Training Manual harder to read. Your eyes are likely to miss a line or read the same line twice.

[illegible]hemicals in the plant

[illegible]ction 2.4 to fill in the table below. List the chemicals (chemical symbols and common name) that you will handle in this area and alongside each one indicate the hazard (including reactivity with other chemicals) and the safety equipment that is correct and necessary when handling that particular chemical.

Chemical	Hazard	Protective Equipment

If you print on every bit of the page the reader finds it harder to locate important information or different parts of the document.

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Presenting a Training Manual
- what to do

These pages of a Training Manual are clear and easy to read. Clear headings, text justified on the left margin only, and short paragraphs help to create this effect.

Unit 1. Material Safety Data Sheets

What is this unit about?

In this section you will become familiar with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and the type of information found on the Sheets.

What will I learn in this unit?

In this unit you will learn:

- what Material Safety Data Sheets are
- the purpose of Material Safety Data Sheets
- the type of information found on the Material Safety Data Sheets.

What section of the Operating Procedures Manual is relevant to this unit?

Section 2.3 and 2.4.

What are Material Safety Data Sheets?

Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about chemicals and how they should be stored and handled. Material Safety Data Sheets are often called MSDSs or MSD Sheets.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act says that a MSDS must be kept for each chemical held at the site.

Terms you may come across

hazard - *cause of risk, damage or harm*
toxic - *poison*
ingestion - *to swallow a substance*
inhalation - *to breath in a substance*
corrosive - *when a chemical eats away the surface of something*

Shaded boxes can be used to highlight information, such as key points, instructions or terms.

What is the purpose of M Sheets?

MSDSs help to:

identify the risks of chemicals;
evaluate the risks; and
control the risks.

What type of information Data Sheets?

Copies of MSDSs can be found in Section 2.4. Turn to Section 2.4 a the type of information that is inclu

Make a list of the type of inf on MSDSs.

Graphics should be directly linked to the text. This graphic symbol shows the reader some action is required - with a pen. The use of symbols should be explained somewhere in the document. In a Training Manual the explanation would be found in the introductory section.

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5. Does it work? Check with your readers

5. Does it work? Check with your readers

The only way of knowing if your document works well is to try it out. It is important to get feedback from people who are likely to use your document.

The extent of testing or trialling will depend on the type of document and how widely it will be used. Documents that are going to be used by a lot of people for a long time should be trialled more extensively than those that will be distributed to only a small group and that have a short life. For example, a training manual should be trialled on a group. For a notice about a safety course coming up, you may simply wish to try it out on one other person.

There a few steps in testing:

❶ Put yourself in the place of the reader and evaluate the document.

❷ Test the document on some of the people who are likely to use it.

❸ Evaluate the effectiveness of your materials by talking to readers. Did they find some parts confusing/clear? Did they understand the purpose of the document? Did they understand the document? What did they think were the most important points?

❹ Don't wait until you've finished writing the document to try it out. You don't want to finish a 200 page training manual to then find out that the people who need to use it can't understand it.

Revising

There is no point trialling a document unless you are going to use the information you get. After the trialling comes the revision.

When you revise a document you need to reconsider:

- the structure
- the content
- the language used and
- the presentation of the document.

Does it work?
Check with your readers
Checklist

- ❒ **Have I tested the document on people who will use it?**
- ❒ **Have I rewritten the parts that readers found hard to understand?**
- ❒ **When I revised the document did I take into account:**
  - **the structure of the document**
  - **the content of the document**
  - **the language used in the document**
  - **the presentation of the document?**

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, your document probably will be clear and easy to read.

6. References

6. References

The following materials provide further information on how to write documents that are clear and easy to understand.

- ***Communicating in the TCF industries: a resource pack***, Australian Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry Training Board, Melbourne, 1994.

- Eagleson, Robert D., ***Writing in Plain English***, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991.

- Lander, J., ***Plain Enlish for Training Materials: a Self-Teaching Kit for Trainees and Supervisors***, Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, Sydney, 1997 (downloaded from http://www.lgsa.org.au/lln/download.htm)

- Lukin, A., ***Effective Communication and Training,*** NSW AMES, Surry Hills, NSW, 2000.

- Pauwels, A., ***Non-discriminatory Language***, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991.

- ***Plain English at Work,*** Susan Murter Communications, Turner, ACT, 1997.

- ***Plain English - Not a Simple Matter,*** NSW Adult Literacy Council and Summerhill Films, Sydney, 1990.

There are many other resources about communication in specific industries. that include sections on using plain English. You can find information about these on the Language Australia National Resource Centre (LANRC) website: http://langoz.anu.edu.au

Working Words

A User's Guide to Written Communication at Work

by **Jan Hagston (Kindler)**

Published by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Victoria.

Writing a document that is clear and easy to understand is difficult. ***Working Words: A User's Guide to Written Communication at Work*** is a guide to making written material easier to read, understand and use. It is targetted at those who write work-place documents - industry or TAFE trainers, managers, supervisors, union representatives or writers of training manuals - but would also be useful for people who want their writing to be clear and easily understood.

Working Words covers:

- the things a writer needs to think about before they begin to write;
- how to structure a document;
- how language can be used to make a document easier to understand;
- how to produce documents that look better and easier to read; and
- the importance of trialling a document before using it.

Sample documents are used to show what to do and what not to do and checklists give writers a quick guide to see that they are on the right track.

Working Words was developed at Western Metropolitan College of TAFE (now part of Victoria University) in Melbourne with funding from the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Victoria.

Adult Education in the Community

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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